



The Onyx Informer

Serving the African diaspora since 1972

PLUS:

Featuring:

The lovely spoken soul artist
Tonya Mathews AKA JaHipster

Going the Distance:

One students story on his
Trip to Iran

For the Sisters

Find out what the ladies
are talking about at the
roundtable part 1

Kids killing Kids?

Shedding some truth on
youth violence in Boston



November 2004

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The opinions and feelings expressed in The Onyx Informer are not necessarily those of the Onyx staff or of the Northeastern administration. The Onyx is a publication run by undergraduate students who oversee all aspects and operations involving the publication.

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Owning a Voice

Welcome Week is over. The banners are gone and the open houses have come and went. Roommates are no longer strangers and finding the location of classes has become easier. Things are now familiar.

As the dust from the whirlwind of September commences to settle, this is the time when many begin to ponder where they fit at Northeastern, their place in the local neighborhoods, the global community, and their direction in life. To those people I suggest that you internally ask yourselves a few questions:

- ★ What defines you?
 - ★ What is your purpose?
 - ★ What are your passions?
 - ★ Where are you going?
 - ★ Where do you want to be?
-
- ★ How are you going to get there?
 - ★ What are the changes you want to see in the world?
 - ★ What are the changes you want to see in your community?
 - ★ What are the changes you wish to see on campus?
 - ★ How are you going to make those changes a reality?

At a young age I realized that I, in some way have an effect on the world that surrounds me. Regardless of how insignificant you may feel your actions or desires are, know that you are unavoidably a part of something larger than you and me.

I am not begging that you organize a sit-in or demonstration on Capitol Hill. I am simply asking that you to stand for something and have a voice.

Today we exist in a "at the click of a mouse" society. Whatever we want we demand to have it

now, packaged and neatly delivered to our doorstep. Information obtained from the media is unfortunately often viewed as absolute truth. One-sided late breaking news is soaked up and regurgitated with indifference instead of well-informed discretion.

We can't lackadaisically accept how circumstances appear on the surface. Additional research and investigation is vital. This especially applies to issues in the community and right here on campus. Everything told to you by local politicians and university officials should be taken with a grain of salt. Contemplate what their veiled interests may be.

Maybe it's true that one person can't initiate change. However each of us represents a finger on a hand. When that hand is balled up into a fist it can strike a mighty blow. Let us collectively be that fist and make an effective impact.



Peace and Blessings

Kat

Editor in Chief

onyx_editorinchief@yahoo.com

~Motivation ~

Politics is the gentle art of getting votes from the poor and campaign funds from the rich, by promising to protect each from the other.

~Oscar Ameringer

No real change has ever been brought about without a revolution...revolution is but thought carried into action.

~Emma Goldman

Storyteller and Friend Forever

The tragedy happened the summer before I began my studies at Bridgewater State College. It was the top story on the five o' clock news; it made the front page of both the *Boston Globe* and the *Herald*. Three beautiful Black college girls shot by an intelligent young Black man, a misfortune that one detective described as the bloodiest, most vicious crime he had ever seen. This tragedy had all the makings of a story that journalists would gravitate too: horror, trauma, and the unfortunate tale of one survivor and two lives ended prematurely. However, I was not a journalist and this devastating event hit home.

I was devastated. It felt as if someone completely tore my heart out of my chest or that it simply ceased beating. I remember the overwhelming

pressure that suppressed me. I almost gave up, but I had to leave home—to face my fears, dry my tears. I had to go away to school. Deep down inside I knew that my friends wanted me to. Today I can honestly say that the healing process has begun.

It has been five years. I understand as a journalist that the stories behind the headlines often remain unexplained. Freelance writer Dick Dahl explained it very clearly when he stated, "Every newspaper story about gun violence tells a

tale of pain and suffering. But after the headlines disappear, the stories about victimization of a broader and more lingering kind usually go unreported." The three young women who were shot execution-style on the morning of their first day of college are my

dear friends. Though one of the victims did survive, the stories behind the headlines have never been told. For that reason I am compelled to be that

echo—to articulate and to enlighten. I want more than anything to erase this tragedy from reality, but that is not possible. I have come to the realization that what I *can* do is write to sooth the pain.

During my internship with *The Onyx Informer* last year I fell in love with writing for the magazine.

It has helped me pinpoint my niche. At this moment in my life,

I am working on becoming an

effective storyteller, with the mission to write and tell the tales that are otherwise left untold.

I am honored to be a part of *The Onyx* team as I look forward to continuing my work as managing editor and making history.

My Friend Forever

Sasha

Managing Editor

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Inner thoughts



Posing near trees planted in memory of my friends

Finding Visibility

Ralph Waldo Ellison was an African-American writer that viewed the world as a place with, "infinite possibilities." In 1952 *Invisible Man* was first published in 1953, it won the National Book Award for fiction. A reflective statement by the awards committee remarked, "Ralph Ellison's impassioned first novel of a Negro rebel in the modern world - '*Invisible Man*' — has a mature literary awareness"... His work proved to be the most remarkable of that decade. This novel described the Negro experience in the United States, extraordinarily. To say the least: Ralph Ellison is a man who has marked history with his elegant, artistic and aesthetic creation with this piece of literature.

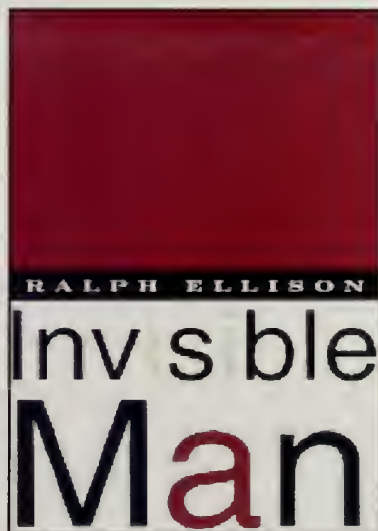
Ellison creates a nameless protagonist, symbolic of the novel's title, *The Invisible Man*. In the introduction, the narrator explains that, without light he is not only invisible, "but formless as well" and aware that "to be unaware of one's form is to live a death." The narrator realized that without light he would not have discovered his invisibility. In the beginning of the novel, he was unseen, unnoticed and unaccounted. He was not physically invisible, as it was racially. His invisibility was confirmed by others.

Ralph Ellison painstakingly adapted the 20th century philosophical doctrine: existentialism. This doctrine closely examines the black experience of oppression and prejudice in America and in turn embraces individualism. Ellison was a well-rounded reader and musician; he strongly engaged with the tradition of African-American social debate. In the

Invisible Man, Dr. Bledsoe rejects the philosophy of Booker T. Washington, for a reason. Booker T. Washington believed that blacks should work toward economic success as a means of reaching racial equality. Ellison had a different view. Ellison also spent time analyzing Marcus Garvey's philosophy of black-nationalism through the character of Ras the Exhorter.

The Invisible Man is saturated with details of Negro culture, Negro rituals, Jazz music and idioms for survival. Ellison takes the reader on a journey: from the deep south to the streets of Harlem. He spent most of his life writing, studying literature, and searching for ways to capture the Negro experience in a different lens. This novel is a never-ending masterpiece. Once you pick it up, make time. I guarantee you will not put it down—until you've read the entire novel.

~ Sasha C. Link



books
theater
movies
music

tv

One of Today's Invisible Men

WHO IS DR. MARK DEAN?

Dr. Dean is an African-American who has shared his creative invention with the world. He has contributed to starting the Digital Revolution—the revolution that made way for the famous Bill Gates, of Microsoft Computers.

Though extremely influential, his work as vice president of IBM has not been acknowledged. Many are not aware that he is the architect of the modern-day personal computer and in addition, has had more than thirty patents pending and holds three of the original nine patents on all PC's.

Unfortunately history has a way of repeating itself. George Sampson, who created the cloth dryer and Alexander Miles, who invented the elevator are also two unrecognized individuals. I feel it is your duty to teach what has been omitted from history.

~ Sasha C. Link

Edutainment

Author Azar Nafisi describes the purpose and the morals of classic western literature, along with oppression, in her latest novel *Reading Lolita in Tehran*. By holding secret underground classes for six handpicked Iranian female university English majors, Nafisi wrestles with controversial social issues considered taboo in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

For the identical reasons that the authors of these western classics have brought forth such social dysfunctions, Nafisi is asking her students and the reader to explore the reasons why people make mistakes, and do some of the disappointing things they do. What is in the nature of man that tempts him to run

amiss? What makes one have the need to dominate over others? What is right, and wrong? What is moral? These and other common themes found in such treasures as *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, *Invitation to a Beheading*, *The Great Gatsby*, and *Lolita*, all banned by Islamic law, are the subject of discussion for her students. We learn from the mistakes of others and we look at ourselves by questioning, discussing, and trying to answer some of the issues that these novels bring to light.

The literature itself also relates to the lives of Iranian women and the students themselves, as they struggle with their own lifestyle in a country whose government has made it their business to control every aspect

of their lives. As is *Lolita* herself, these young women are being held against their will and it is the will of others that dictate their lives.

As reading a good book takes us to another place, the secret book club Nafisi creates a retreat of sorts. Each time the girls enter the author's home, they are briefly transcended to a better place. They are no longer in a theocracy. They are miles from Tehran. For a time, they are free.

~Paul Guay



Richard Wright was an African-American short story writer and novelist. In 1940, Wright's novel *Native Son* was chosen for the Book-of-the-Month Club selection.

Wright and his brother spent a period of time in an orphanage when his father left his mother. Perhaps that is the reason the *Native Son*, places emphasis on 19 year-old Bigger Thomas who grows up in

Chicago's Southside Ghetto. He portrays twenty-year-old Bigger Thomas, as a poor, uneducated, black man growing up in the 1930's in Chicago. He lives in an apartment with huge rats and no privacy, no control over his life and is burdened with prejudice and racism. This crowded rat-infested apartment that Bigger shares with his mother, younger sister and brother is like a prison cell, that they are all, physically and emotionally trapped in.



This novel is a social protest against the affects that racism and hatred had on Blacks growing up in that time period. *Native Son* highlights three major points: fear, flight, and fate. Wright paints a society where Bigger has no outlets to vent or gain support to grow as an individual. It is worth the read.

~Sasha C. Link

**Native Son:
Good, Old-Fashion
American Oppression**



Not many can say that they've studied with Sonia Sanchez and shared a stage with Nikki Giovanni. However for spoken soul artist **Tonya Mathews** all is her reality and she's blazing a trail of her own.

What is it about your hips that has inspired the stage name Jahipster?

The name JaHipster comes from a mantra: God made me who I am, and These Hips will make me famous. It's got a little double entendre there because "These Hips" actually refers to the first poem I performed which became a signature piece. It's catchy and empowering, but it also marked the point in my life where I accepted my own body as my own ideal body image. I have always been a 'big girl.' Not necessarily chunky, but I am always tall and thick – though I have my SlimFast moments. The poem was written in the moment where I was beautiful regardless and the rest is history.

"Ghetto Glassware" and "Nothing to Wear" are two poems that definitely strike something within me. Where do poems like those two originate?

Everything I'm writing at this phase is about the world around me and, more or less, how Black folk

interact with it. "Ghetto Glassware" is a commentary on all the young girls in Baltimore that strolled the streets wearing those yellow-tinted sunglasses the summer tints became really popular. There is something hard about a yellow tint – not pink, not blue, not purple. Yellow. It came with more attitude and more pain, and I wanted to speak to that. "Nothing to Wear" is a commentary on the choices I know I'm making everyday, from how to wear my hair to what clothes to wear. I always decided I'd just wait until I got tenure or something to wild-out on 'White' America, but then I began to worry. I may not have enough of myself intact if I waited that long. Still, when in Rome, do as the Romans do, right? So living in a world where you are not the standard – be it as a female or as a black person – you have to make some hard, hopefully conscious, choices everyday that your counterparts take for granted.

How are you able to satisfy, balance, and indulge your artistic talents and your biomedical and chemical engineering side?

You have already hit the key: balance. People ask all the time, "How do you reconcile engineering and poetry?" I don't. They don't go together – at least not in my thought processes. There are times when I think, I would make a lot more progress on my research if I cut out the poetry and speaking. So I do, and I'm just so off balance that everything suffers – the writing and the engineering. The same thing happens if I drop engineering. I've really got a right-left brain thing going here. I suppose I'm so in touch with my sense of balance, that I feel it when one side is suffering and it sort of shuts me down. I think everyone has a need for such analytical and artistic balance, but most people can't feel that they are out of wack. But I can tell you that it will have something to do with teaching, and it will be something in which I can be analytical and artistic. I may teach engineering; I may teach poetry. I may teach through performance, or writing, or by example in some research field. I'm expecting a path to be pointed out to me any day now.

What author/poet/singer/rapper/etc...do you draw inspiration from?

In general, good work can inspire you. I may have a particular song or phrase from a particular artist that I call to but I don't necessarily have them 'in rotation.' I would say that I am a big fan of Toni Morrison, Nikki Giovanni and Sonia Sanchez. Musically, I'm studying Me'shell Ndege Ocello right now. I really like her rhythm and how she is able to put complex thoughts to a beat. That's the same reason I like Dave Matthews and Stevie Wonder.

When joined together what message do you hope people will get from your poetry?

When I write a particular poem, there is usually a particular message I am trying to get across – some point or political view or call to change. I'm witty and subtle, but the point I'm trying to make is usually very clear. But there have been times when folks have come up to me and simply said I was their inspiration to be truer to themselves – be they male, female, writers, businessmen, visionaries. They're occupation or plan in life doesn't seem to matter – what matters is that I moved them in the direction they thought they should have been moving in the first place. And I think that's better message than any specific point I could ever put in my poetry.

~ Kat Noel

For more information on Tonya Mathews visit www.JaHipster.com

City of A Lost Youth

If you were to live in a city of God what would it look like? Would there be beautiful houses, golden streets, no poverty, and blissful carefree citizens?

Ironically in the movie *City of God** (*Cidade de Deus*), named after one of Rio De Janeiro's most notorious slum, it's a place where people are far from lighthearted and instead of streets lined with gold they are littered with drugs and merciless youth violence.

Based on a novel written by Paulo Lins, the *City of God* is an independent film that tells the story of Brazilian housing project in the 60's and 70's where youths either live by drugs and bloodshed or die because of it.

City of God explores the lives of two boys who follow opposing trails. Rocket (Alexandre Rodrigues), who is the films narrator, only wishes to escape the hostile environment in which he was raised. There's also Li'l Dice (Douglas Silva), Rocket's complete opposite, that later changes his name to Li'l Zé (Leanadro Frimino da Hora) who becomes the *City of God's* most feared, volatile, and bloodthirsty drug lord. Although acquainted with Li'l Ze and his compadre Benny (Phellipe Haagensen) Rocket chooses to stay away from the criminal activity and instead pursue photography.

From childhood to adulthood Rocket takes the audience on a journey through the various stories

within the *City of God* and illustrates how each of the city's inhabitants is connected. He demonstrates how the vicious effects of children aspiring to be gang leaders, criminals, and drug dealers can tear a

community apart and dissolve the pure and boundless dreams of adolescence.

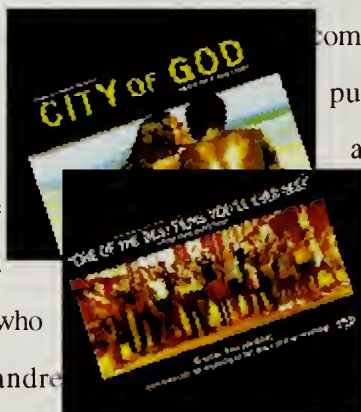
Director's Fernando Meirelles and Kátia Lund's decision to cast theatrically untrained kids straight from the ghetto

was nothing short of brilliance. The moody, textured, untouched performances the children delivered were exactly what holds viewers mesmerized.

With every poignant and colorfully rich scene viewers will feel their heart and emotions racing. The *City of God* is a raw film, filled with betrayal, greed, violence, and innocence lost.

~Rosena Cornet

* Check your local video store for availability




Edutainment

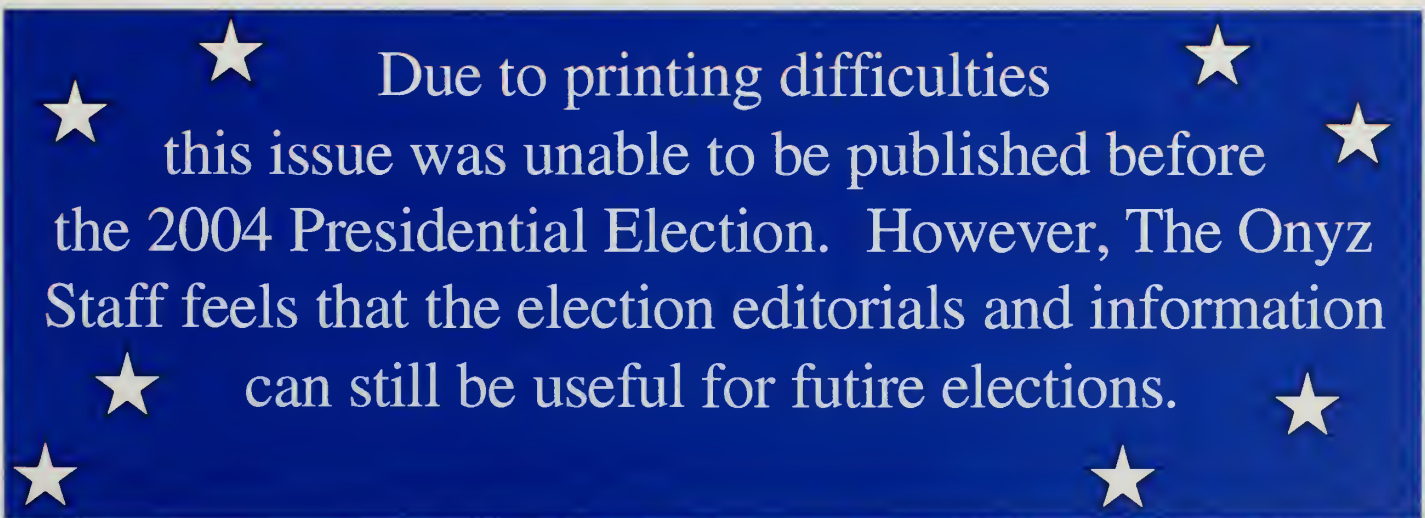
mo

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A red rectangular background with a blue border. It features ten white five-pointed stars arranged in two curved patterns, one on the left and one on the right.

RAISE OUR VOICES

A blue rectangular background with a white border. It features ten white five-pointed stars arranged in two curved patterns, one on the left and one on the right.

Due to printing difficulties
this issue was unable to be published before
the 2004 Presidential Election. However, The Onyz
Staff feels that the election editorials and information
can still be useful for future elections.

Campaign Becomes Broken Record

If there is one obvious, undeniable theme that defines the very essence of the 2004 presidential race, it is repetition. After months of Bush and Kerry campaigning across the country, shaking hands and kissing babies it has become painfully obvious to many citizens that there is very little meaningful information that came out of the three presidential debates. Anyone who has read a newspaper or watched any television coverage of each candidate's campaign should realize that unfortunately, they have heard it all before.

The debates brought more of the same campaign rhetoric with the added benefit of a nationwide audience listening to the continued replications from both candidates. Bush fumbled over his words while dismissing the senator as a flip-flop politician whose views change with popular opinion. Kerry showed off his superior debating skills while constantly reprimanding Bush for leading America into a war it was unprepared for. All of this, of course, was old news. Neither candidate excelled in proving that they were the steadfast choice to the millions of undecided voters who are the real prize in this election.

It oftentimes seemed that the candidates were more focused on repeating their off-stated campaign messages than actually introducing new ideas and strategies for leading America for the next four years. Bush claimed that Kerry is an

unsteady, free-spending Massachusetts Liberal who will tax the middle class while failing in the defense of our country. Kerry countered that the president rushed into war without a well-conceived plan for the Iraq people and our troops. He also made it clear that his opponent has sent the U.S. into financial doom by running up the deficit while doing little to prevent the middle class from diluting into poverty. All old news, all regurgitated for our viewing displeasure.

While it is important to remind voters of their stances on the issues, not being able to articulate anything new proved to be the most glaring downfall of both candidates. With less than a dozen states where a real battle for electoral votes is expected, there was so much to gain, so many undecided voters to really connect with by laying out fresh, dynamic arguments for their candidacy and positions—but it never occurred.

You could almost feel the undecided voters across the country pleading in front of their television sets to Bush and Kerry. "Please, inspire me; show me that I can feel confident in voting for you." Sadly, it never happened. The debates were flat. They were a mere review of the candidate's positions with nothing new to consider. Each

man attacked the other with a degree of fervent anger, but it was mostly old news. We heard Bush telling us of Kerry flip-flopping months ago. Kerry already explained how Bush sent us to war without the necessary help from a strong alliance. It was as if a review of the debates could have been written before they took place. Taken as a whole, the three debates amounted to little more than a tidy, packaged collection of barbs and digs at each other that did little to convince the minds of millions of undecided Americans who are desperate for inspiration in our political leaders.

Here we are, days away from Nov. 2nd, wishing that one of them would shed their layers of pre-determined attacks and stump speeches and tell us something we can be enlightened and impassioned by. Even if Bush is going to mispronounce "nuclear", Kerry should tell us something new about weapons of mass destruction. The senator could be long winded and over-explanatory. It would be ideal if he could tell us why he would be a better president instead of referencing so much to the Halliburton scandal.







We're here, waiting for you gentlemen. Give us a reason to put you into office. Just don't give us more of the same.

~ Joshua Eastman



Voters' Bill of Rights



- Each registered voter in this state has the right to:
 - Vote and have his or her vote accurately counted.
 - Cast a vote if he or she is in line at the official closing of the polls in that County.
 - Ask for and receive assistance in voting.
 - ▪ Receive up to two replacement ballots if he or she makes a mistake prior to the ballot being cast.
 - An explanation if his or her registration is in question.
 - If his or her registration is in question, cast a provisional ballot.
 - Prove his or her identity by signing an affidavit if election officials doubt the voter's identity.
 - Written instructions to use when voting, and, upon request, oral instructions in voting from elections officers.
 - Vote free from coercion or intimidation by elections officers or any other person.
 - Vote on a voting system that is in working condition and that will allow votes to be accurately cast.
- 
- 

C concerning politics it has been

an interesting past couple of years both nationally and internationally.

How do young people in this country feel about politics in general? Is voting really making a difference? Is our voice really being heard? Can we really trust a system that proved faulty in 2000?

While these questions can not be answered by one person alone there is one thing that is very clear about this electoral year. There needs to be changes. While the media is now focused on *voting* to make a change, we, the youth of the nation, have to take an extra step forward to *work* towards change. Voting is a tool that allows our voices to be heard in politics and that tool should be utilized whenever the opportunity presents itself.

I am reminded of a speech from Malcolm X to a group of young people regarding the civil rights era and the government's role towards "solving" the problems of the nation.

The students have been deceived somewhat in what is known as the civil rights struggle (which was never designed to solve the problem). The students were maneuvered in the direction of thinking the problem was already analyzed, so they didn't try to analyze it for themselves.

Malcolm's speech stated that as long as young people depended on the power structure alone then the problems would never be solved. We as a generation have to develop our own solutions to solve the problems affecting us today. We have to make changes by voting even though voting is *not* our only option. We need to organize amongst ourselves and

POWER IN NUMBERS

A Generation Picking Up the Political Pieces

create that change. Notes should be taken from history. We become as vocal and opinionated as the previous generation.

Politics is the language of a nation. We need to learn how to speak that language in order to see actual results. It is imperative that we become just as passionate about local politics as we do about local sports teams. Voices should be used to make sure that we get proper representation and adequate in our local governments to create change, locally. Any real revolution begins at home.

There also needs to be a balance outside of politics. We must come together come together as a collective. Again, organizing is a very powerful and effective tool. It has time and time again proved to be very effective during the movements that have come before us. Organizing is an option that we should never forget because in essence it has made us who we are as a people today. What better way is it to make a difference for the people, than to work with the people?

For our generation this is an interesting crossroad in American politics. Ultimately we are affected by the decisions made in politics. After all, we are the ones that fight wars, not politicians. We

are the leaders of tomorrow and before our time is done we will be the guardians of the next generation. How do we participate in politics? Do we "Rock the Vote" and have faith in politicians to hold true to their word or do we take extra steps forward, and hold these politicians accountable to the people?

I cannot speak for my entire generation, however, I can say you will see me on November 2, taking that initial step and using my voice to vote. In the meanwhile, we need to continue to work with the community to make change. We the people ultimately decide the fate of politicians like Bush and Kerry. So, vote but also remember to look past Nov 2. While the media would have us believe that whoever steps into office will fix the problems this nation faces we must not leave all in our future president's hands. It is necessary to constantly remind our upcoming leader of the promises made during his campaign and our expectations. I

Our goal is change and we need to make that difference like Malcolm declared, "by any means necessary."

~ Stan Dominique

www.citizenchange.com

www.massvote.net

www.rockthevote.com

www.lvv.org

www.bet.com

latinovote.com

“MY Voice”

My eyes are wide shut as this society keeps it eye on me.
Giving me a choice of two evils is not a choice at all.
Cocaine/heroina or stay undecided blazed on haze.
The burning bush that has more ties to the Middle East then a camel.
And more devilish ways then slave masters back in the day.
Cranberry Kerry sweet but a sour after taste.
You stand for what exactly?
Ya like a player in the city scared to commit.
You stand for nothing you'll fall for anything in office.
You won't bring me down to a lower level with your R&B sananagins thinking
I'm gonna vote for a democrat band stand.
To choose one would be showing the other more respect.
Where I'm from respect is earned neither one has earned mine yet.
You can choose without asking question or better yet without getting answers.
One of many sheep led into the den of wolves.
But I'm looked upon as the Beast.
Will you send your troops into the Florida Keys to help the people in need as you
did the Middle East?
I think not.
Preach!
That's what the pimps say.
But I use it in the sense I'm saying some good shit.
So press record get some pins and things the dynasty we're building will turn
more heads then them spinning rims.
Ignorance is a plague not singled out by Race, Color, or Sex.
Its form only shown when those embrace its deadly grip.

~ Zacari D. Thomas '04
KAP INC. Yo!

Dear Brothers,

A Sister's Intimate Letter

"This life is temporary but the soul is eternal, separate the real from the lie, let me learn you" – Mos Def

To all the men I've loved, and even more to the ones I've grown to hate,

Tall, short, and medium height.

Yellow, beige, caramel, and chocolate.

Thick and thin.

Wide and slim.

Perfect, imperfect, perfectly imperfect.

Men of all types I've known, experienced, and grown with.

The beauty of a black man cannot be described. Whether it's their swagger, the hat perfectly cocked to the side, the walk that says to the world, "though you put me down, I continue to rise," or their full lips that make me melt with just a smile. I can't help but to fall over and over again. As I shake my head and think, "if loving you is wrong, I don't want to be right," on a Monday and, "pack your bags, and keep it moving," on a Sunday, it is the memories of the beauty of black love that keep me believing.

Through my trials and tribulations in the single life, I've cried, screamed, cursed, believed, gave unselfishly, taken selfishly, tasted the sweetness of affection at its peak, and purged the sour flavor left when the affection is no longer there. Drawing the conclusion that though I've made mistakes, I can't say I haven't tried. I am able to understand that every breakup isn't the end, every end doesn't mean there won't be a better beginning, and every beginning could be forever. It could be the brother sitting next to you in a lecture, the papi in the fly Benz, the gentleman who holds the door for you with a "good morning," on your way to work, or the friend you're just too afraid of going *there* with. You never know when your chance to be swept off your feet is around the corner. Take a deep breath and inhale the subtlety of the chase and recognize that you are deserving of all they have to offer.

Too many times we knock our brothers down saying, "men are nothing but dogs," and throwing our hands in the air with defeat. But, I believe that though I may not have found the one for me, there is no harm in sharing a smile to let him/they/you, know that I feel your struggle and though a lifetime of victories and defeats are ahead black men we appreciate you for all you are and do.

"I wish to live, because life has within it all that which is good, that which is beautiful, and that which is love. Therefore, since I have known all these things, I have found them to be reason enough and I wish to live for generations and generations" – Lorraine Hansberry

Melissa Potter

WARNING!

**Highly uncensored
Do not read
without proper
handling**

**The Onyx Informer's
RoundTable is an open
uncensored discussion on hot
topics.**

*Every story is a unique one,
with a different tempo,
perhaps a foreign beat, and an
exclusive melody. Six young
women, Jackie Deans, Nelly
Umeh, Nadine Yaver,
Bena Berry, Sasha
Link, and Kat Noel,
gathered to share
parts of their own
individual song.
Each of them moved
to a different rhythm
with the same
message of
encouragement,
support, emotion and
laughter. Their ears
listened as their
hearts shared.*

JD: The person who has influenced me the most is my father, Livingston Mandell Deans and also my mother Delores Deans. My father was a business owner and that's the reason why I love business so much. He was a dog. He just had that Caribbean man tendency, where you have your wife but you have to have this hot girl on the side. So this is why I am very mistrusting of men. He has told me, "as a man you have to have many women. What sense does one make?" He spoke to me frankly about how men are. I've grown up around a lot of men and I have a lot of male friends. I see that they do what my father has told me they would do. I've never been hurt

by any man before but I look at the way they act with women, or listen to what they tell when they confide in me.

BB: I really can't think of who shaped me. I moved around a lot. Not to say that many people didn't but I've had a really bad childhood;

**"I saw a lot of negative
images of women my whole
life and I knew that they
weren't who I wanted to be."**

~ Bena Berry

from just living with different people and groups home. I can't say what shaped me but I can say what made me detract from things. I saw a lot of negative images of women my whole life and I knew that they weren't who I wanted to be. I didn't necessarily know what success looked like but I knew it wasn't women on welfare, the women that were prostitutes outside on the corner, or the women who were getting beat. I knew that wasn't what I wanted.

KN: You know when you're young and your mother tells

you you're going to be just like her? You protest and declare that you won't but as I become older I do the same things my mother does. My mother works nonstop and doesn't know how to say no. On her agenda to plan her day does not only include what she needs to do for herself but also what she's going to do for other people. I find myself doing that. I tell her she shouldn't do it but I realize why she does. It makes her feel good to help people; that is her purpose. I've seen her clean houses and do what is necessary to make ends meet. Instead of pulling away from it, I find myself accepting it more. I'm proud of my mom and where she comes from.

JD: I'm especially amazed at what mothers do. They don't have the benefits that we had

growing up in the states. My parents are Jamaican. Sometimes I feel that I will become a multibillionaire, at other times it's scary because you come to a whole other country and wonder how they've accomplished so much. Before my father started his business my mother was pregnant with me selling fish on the street in Queens out of a Chevy van. The first two years my parents arrived at The United States they saved up to buy a house and they were just selling fish on the street. It irritates me to see people who don't do anything with their lives when they're brought up in America and they actually have the benefits. My father when he started made \$97 a week. When my parents

divorced my father moved into his mother's attic. He saved up his money, bought a van, and that's how he started his shipping company.

SL: All these stories are truly compelling and I don't know where to start. My mom is exceptional. She is a blessing. I would love to be more like her. As I watch her daily I'm beginning to see so many unique characteristics in her that I never seen before. The reason she is so exceptional is that she went up to eighth grade and that was it. Her reason for that was because she didn't like school. Throughout my career, going to college and deciding to go, she has always been supportive. She's always saying, "Hang in there. I can't tell you much but just hang in there." She is also so blunt. She's extra blunt. That's the way I'd like to be. I'd like to be really independent and I'm aiming towards that. She was the youngest of seventeen. I got a grant to conduct a study on her whole family's genealogical timeline and I learned so much about her during my study. The stories my mother knew were so compelling. She's a treasurer untold. My mother's father died when my grandmother was nine months pregnant with my mom. I just think back and feel that she's a gift and I'm a gift. That whole family tree would be completely nonexistent had he died at the sixteenth child I wouldn't be here. My four godfathers taught me what men are all about and that's why I am this big defender of men, their values, and their strengths. All

my godfathers would supply me with different prospective even after they got married. To me a man is just like me except he expresses himself differently. He sometimes has a hard time expressing all the emotions that suppress him. Don't get me wrong men do have their flaws. I was hurt in a long term relationship but from there I

"You can pick shoes,
and refuse men."
~ Jackie Deans

am really informed. I tend not to be hurt that much and it's because of my godfathers. My father last but not least. I am a spitting image of him in every shape and form. I am blessed to have him as a father. I see myself in him more then I do my mother. It scares me because he's a mirror. Sometimes I don't want to be careless like him and so open to souls. I can meet you and you can a homeless man on the street or the director of a business and I'm right there; listening to your story even though I'm late for work. I can't leave because the person is just spilling. That's the way my father is.

JD: My father died my freshman year at Northeastern. The years that he was sick from cancer I went to visit him every Saturday and Sunday. He would share stories with me of the hot girls he had and teach me that, "you can pick shoes and refuse men." What I also loved about him was that he would fund anything that had to do with education. He believed in education. I take pictures and he knew I loved taking pictures.

He gave me \$1,000 to learn photography. He believed that I had to get an education because that was the only way I could get ahead. I don't think everyone gets that. Not everyone forces education. Often children are pushed to grow up quickly.

NY: My stories are a lot different but also a lot of the same things. My mother is from Brooklyn, NY. My father is from Columbia. My childhood was never that happy. I'm not sure how to explain this. I never felt close to anybody. I guess I kind of felt closer to my father because he was somebody I wanted approval from. I was never really close to my mother. I have an identical twin sister. We're very close. She's my best friend although we're very different. My mother..I'm starting to become more like her. She led a very different life. I never had to go through a lot of things she's gone through because my mother didn't want me to. She went through a bunch of foster homes and nobody wanted her. She dropped out of high school to work. Now she's works under a Chair at Rutgers University and she's the Department Manager. She came from nothing, got two years of college and is now making about \$70,000 a year. My mother

worked her way up. She's a workalcoholic. She just found out a few years ago that she has lupus but she still works sixty hours a week. She's struggling with it and I admire her a lot. I see a lot her workalcoholic tendencies in me. I'm up all night doing stuff. I don't think about myself. I think I can count maybe twice I went shopping last year. I want to do a lot of things and I forget about myself. That's just like my mother. There was this high school teacher that really influenced me. She was this really short Jewish woman. She used to wear a suit and then wear sneakers. (Everyone laughs) She was a real influence on me because I want to be a teacher. I still visit Mrs. Rosenfeld now. She's still the same way doing the same things. I was always taught to be obedient and respect authority. It's now that I'm starting to be different due to the influences that I've had in college. I never thought I was worth something until I came to college. I'm a completely different person then I was in high school. I was doing a lot of things that weren't healthy for me.

KN: I could never see that.

NY: I was a bad ass.

SL: You were rebelling.

NY: Yeah. Now I'm so straightedge. Now is the positive part of my life. I'm really enjoying getting older and not being young. I don't miss my youth at all.

NU: My two influences are my parents; positively and negatively. My counter influence was school. My parents had me believe that I was better than everyone when in fact they should have taught me that I could become a better person. My dad tried to live vicariously through his kids and still

"I will compete with people not to compare, but to improve myself."

~ Nelly Umeh

does. He's a great person and has many ideas but he comes off as the jack-of-all-trades. The biggest problem of the "Nigerian mentality" is that money makes the world go around. It does in some people's case but money doesn't bring you happiness. My dad is always thinking money is going to solve all problems while neglecting the things that money can't buy. There's not a lot of sensitivity in Nigerian culture. If you're crying you're told to stop making noise. My mom now is getting more affectionate with us because all the things that she has planned for are actually happening.

KN: Did your parent's lack of affection cause you to become more affectionate?

NU: I think it makes me want more affection. My parents expect so much out of us but don't appreciate what we do. I remember coming home with straight Bs and it was a very hard semester. My father didn't even congratulate me for making it on

honor roll. He asked me,

"why aren't there any As?"

It got to the point that I would have more Bs than As on my report card and I would go home feeling like a failure. I was a very sensitive child.

My brother and sisters didn't look anything like me. My brother has green eyes and is light skinned. My two sisters that are directly after me are light skin with hazel eyes but then you have this little

brown baby with brown eyes.

Plus I was a chubby baby.

They were slimmer than me and I was the fat one. Everyone one would ask, "what happened to you?" I felt so unwanted. So I told myself that I would be the academic one. I worked my butt off. If I knew that someone in this room had a 3.69 I would bust my behind to get a 3.7. I will compete with people not to compare but to improve myself. I keep my competitive attitude to myself. It's something that has been seriously driving me but I will never bring down another person.

SL: And that's admirable.

NU: I always wanted to compliment people more but I didn't want to compliment the wrong people. Now I realized that a compliment is a compliment whether you take it as a, "I know" or a, "thank you very much". In

complimenting other people I feel better about myself. For the longest time I realized that I was extremely negative. I got to the point that I realized I wasn't going to get anywhere when I see everyone else as less than me.

Self-Image

NU: I was bigger then both of my sisters up until college and I worked it off. I always had low self-esteem as far as my looks. I hated the way I looked. I didn't think any pictures of me looked good. To this day my legs could never get any smaller. They could be pencils and still look big to me. I have such a distorted image of how I should look or how I can look. It got to the point that I was like you know what God gave me some big ass legs; I'm going to have to work with them for the rest of my life.

KN: Nelly your legs are not even big.

NU: That's the thing I see them as the biggest legs.

SL: Stand up.

Nelly stands up from the table.

SL: Can I get them?!

BB: That's Sasha's thing. She wants big legs.

KN: Nelly and I shared a room at a National Society of Black Engineer's Regional Leadership Conference. At one point we were both undressing and I look over at Nelly. I'm looking at her and realize that Nelly has a nice shape. Nelly your shape is so nice!

NU: Kat I swear to you I have no waist. I have the biggest legs. When I was in high school I was a chubby kid the whole time. I could never fit anything. I was always a size fourteen. I had this thing that I had to be a size six, to the point now I will not buy clothes bigger then a size six unless it's by accident.

"I was a tomgirl when I was young. I was the girl with the pigtails, ribbons and a dress but a hole in my stockings from running around with the boys."

~ Kat Noel

KN: This is interesting because most women develop a self-image complex due to men but you think that way because of your family.

NU: I was never told I was cute because I wasn't the lightest with the light eyes. People would ask me whose child I was because I didn't look like any of them. I was super sensitive about it and I see it in my little sister now. I feel tears about to come out my eyes.

SL: Group hug.

All the ladies hug.

NU: I'm sorry, it was just a lot.

NY: When I was in high school I used to be fat. I still sometimes think that.

KN: You probably weren't even fat though. There's difference with being big and being slightly big but healthy. Nelly you're beautiful and Nadine you're beautiful. You

ladies have to see pictures of Nelly. Nelly you are fierce.

NU: I always need improvement. I will never be satisfied.

SL: This comes from your family.

NU: It's from family and growing up with everyone being small and I was the fat kid. I would come home crying in seventh grade feeling that I was the fattest girl in school.

KN: You probably weren't Nelly.

SL: As a baby or a young woman growing up it distorts your image of beauty.

NU: My sisters are now bigger then me and are gorgeous. I know that if I shot back up to a size ten that I would probably hate myself.

It's the weirdest complex. I feel like I should not pay attention to any media. I have this really big scar on my leg from an accident. The scar takes up a lot of space and I'm subconscious about it. I don't even want to wear skirts.

KN: Nelly I've seen your legs and have never noticed a scar.

NU: That's the thing but I know it's there.

Nelly shows us her scar.

KN: I'm a person who scares very easily. I was a tom girl when I was young. I was the girl with the pigtails, ribbons and a dress but a hole in my stockings

from running around with the boys. Due to that I have scars. Though I don't like them, I see them as character. You see someone else's legs and it's a blank canvas but scars tell a story. Only people, who are too concerned about their own looks, go around looking at other people.

NU: I've kind of gotten past it. I started wearing skirts. I didn't get into myself till I got much older. I realized that everyone walks around as if their stuff doesn't stink but behind close doors it's funky as hell.

KN: What is beauty to you now Nelly?

NU: It's anybody who can take what they have just keep it. You may weigh five hundred pounds but are the best five hundred pounds on this planet. Confidence is beauty.

NY: People think beauty is the "magazine girl".

KN: Even the magazine girls aren't perfect. I read an article with Alicia Keys and she said sometimes she'd view pictures of herself and see parts of her body shaven off. She calls them back and tells them to put it back.

BB: They did that to Beyonce on FHM. It happens to a lot more Black women because they want them to fit into the western image, which is Anglo-Saxon White European.

NY: For my last co-op I worked with middle school girls. I worked with them about female's issues. I remember one girl who would eat a bag of chips and she was a toothpick. She ate a bag of chips a day because she was scared to gain weight. A lot of them are like

that. They don't eat, are worried about their weight, and want to look like someone else. They don't take care of themselves.

SL: A lot of it comes from home. We had a student at Bridgewater whose mom and dad would write notes on the refrigerator.

BB: I went to the girl's house and there was a picture of a pig on her refrigerator that said, "those who

"You go through this selfcultivation and grow to get more comfortable with yourself."

~ Jackie Deans

indulge-bulge". This was done by her parents to remind her not to over eat.

NU: My sisters are big and they're like, "whatever I'm fat but I'm a good looking fat". I admire that about them so much. They could be busting out of their pants but they still carry their head high.

JD: When I was really young I was always fat because my father always stuffed me. If you came over my father's house he had to entertain you. You can't leave my house without eating. Even though I was fat I never got teased for it because my personality was so strong. If you're like, "Yo, Jackie you're fat," I'd be like, "What really happened to your face though?" People always see me as confident because of my personality but I never was.

SL: Nadine you have mentioned confidence early. That word goes so far. When you have the confidence and it protrudes in your life it really makes a difference when you're dealing with dating, friendship, professors, and racism.

KN: When you're on your lowest of lows you never know who is walking by and admiring you. JD: You go through this ill self cultivation and you grow to get more comfortable with yourself. NU: When I was in California doing co-op I spent a lot of time alone. It was hard because I always felt that I had to be around somebody. I realized that if I don't like myself no else

will either. I've gone to the movies by myself. I went sight seeing alone. Granted it hasn't solved all my confidence issues but at least that aspect of me realizes it's not the end of the world.

KN: To bring this conversation back to the issue of beauty I want to discuss something angers me a lot. When I look at the young girls who live in Boston I feel that there is no hope. Where I come from my mother's daughters have to look the best. It wasn't even till about sophomore year in college I really started dressing down. So because of my upbringing

I've been taught to look nice and polished but when I look at little girls now, they aren't taking care of themselves. They don't take the time to be individuals instead they want to look like their friends who also aren't taking care of themselves.

BB: It's like a uniform, especially with people of color. Nobody wants to break out of it. Latino and Black men have it harder because men are getting to the point they want to fight about clothes. Women it's easier to have somewhat of a funky style but with men if you don't have those two hundred and fifty dollar sneakers you will hear it all the time everyday.

KN: I don't mean to judge people because you can do whatever you want with your fashion but at least look well kept. These little girls may have the expensive t-shirts that their friends wear, the expensive jeans, or sneakers but you when you look past all that you can see a little girl who is still doesn't know how to take care of herself. It may even be hygiene and a lot of girls don't know that. They need to know that tight jeans may be cute but the vagina needs to breathe. Not to sound old but I saw this girl and her jeans were so tight I just wanted to cut them.

NU: I think it's not only physical presentation but also when they open their mouths. I've been through the Boston school system and seen girls do things simply because guys thought it was cute.

BB: A lot of them come from places where they have no home structure. You're looking at a woman in a video and that's where you're getting your image of beauty or your

mother doesn't care because she's out smoking crack or selling her ass. NU: Living in Boston I've noticed that a lot of kids live in houses. A lot of these kids that come out the house looking like crap live in houses and have parents who work. Back to what I was saying before about them opening their mouths. I used to take the eight bus to school every single day. There were a group of three or four girls on the bus all the time. You called hear their

“ I never learned how to love myself and I still don't know how to love myself sometimes.”

~ Nadine Yaver

conversation from the front of the bus. They were ignorant, loud, rude, and excessive.

KN: We need to reclaim our girls.

BB: These are children, young people. These are kids who come from households where their parents may not be there all the time. Who is going to tell them not to have their ass hanging out?

NY: I worked with a bunch of middle school and high school girls and we did activities about how to stay healthy and take care of yourself. We even tried to take girls to the gynecologist but we got a lot of opposition from the parents, especially immigrant Latinos because they feel it automatically means their girl is having sex. I feel it's this whole media driven culture.

Everything is so quick. Kids are disinterested and want everything now. Television has taken over

JD: It's also that the parents are not raising their children.

NY: Parents don't teach their kids how to love themselves. I never learned how to love myself and I still don't know how to love myself sometimes. When you look around at all this

stuff and don't match up to that you begin not to love who you are.

KN: I see little girls who saw that video girl with the long hair so they want it too. You can see the breakage in the front but they'll just slap a weave on it. I'm like, "Baby girl work with that foundation that you have and then try to get there. Don't force what's not there."

They're not taught to work with what they have instead they want what someone else has.

SL: I had an older sister who showed me how to iron and to always matched.

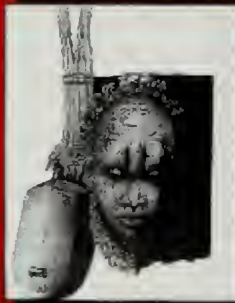
When I was in the Mo Vaughn Youth Program I saw the opposite. There were four girls who were born and breed in

Dorchester. My mother ironed my clothes and told me what wouldn't work, their mothers weren't home when they got dressed. I was taught to clean my teeth, tongue, and mouth; they were taught survival of the fittest.

BB: I am a development of those places and that's why I say that the majority are underprivileged. My mother is one of the nastiest women. She does things that are not hygienically correct and my sister picked up a lot of her ways. I knew that she was not the type of person I wanted to be. I don't know about West Indians but a lot of African-American women come from generations of broken homes. I love my family to death and I would not allow anyone to talk about them. However my mother is promiscuous, my grandmother was promiscuous, and my great grandmother was promiscuous. I chose not to follow down that path but how can I blame my sister when that is all she has seen?

SL: It draws me to the whole idea that it takes a village to raise a child. It takes people like your teachers, pastors, and your friends.

**FIND OUT WHAT
MORE THE LADIES
HAVE TO SAY IN THE
FEBRUARY ISSUE OF
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If you are taking the time now to read this article, you are probably extending your life here on earth for at least one day, maybe three. Now you may ask how? One simply word explains it: Knowledge. If you put it into an equation you have—LIFE-IGNORANCE x KNOWLEDGE (+PREVENTION) = A HEALTHY YOU.

Okay, the equation may be a little bit awkward; however taking blood pressure medication at 23 years old, being diagnosed with HIV at 17 or even dying of a heart attack at 35 is not cool. The fact is—a huge percentage of Americans, especially African Americans are dying of preventative diseases at the cost of horrifically poor health decisions. This makes it imperative to research, learn, take charge of your health, and make healthy lifestyle modifications.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the incidence of AIDS is six times higher in African-Americans and three times higher among Hispanics than among White people. The epidemic is growing rapidly among minority populations. In addition, it is the leading killer of African-American males. Question: Are condoms available at every drugstore and handed out free in most schools and publicly funded health clinics regardless of race? If the answer is yes, than you decide how important it is to protect yourself. You finally decide to put a condom on. I recommend you continue that practice.

What are you putting into your stomach? Healthy living includes healthy eating perhaps this is an additional reason obesity is now one of the fastest growing epidemics in the U.S. It is profoundly growing more in children and teenagers. African Americans are predisposed genetically to various conditions. The distrust of your physicians, moderate to severe ignorance, healthcare disparities, and of course eating fried foods, collard greens, ham, biscuits and drinking sugary Kool-Aid does not add to a healthy diet.

All of these factors exacerbate our predisposition to poor healthcare that amounts to risk factors like obesity, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, which in turn could lead to diabetes or heart disease, confirming that CHD (Coronary Heart Disease) is greater in Black Americans than in White Americans. To add to those statistics, there is a higher occurrence of smoking, of hypertension, obesity, left ventricular hypertrophy (LVH), and diabetes in Blacks.

For every White American who gets diabetes, 1.6 African Americans get diabetes. Available data indicates that the probability of African American's dying from CHD In 1993, among children and young adults, doubled their chances opposed to the whites who are hospitalized for asthma

Other issues like infant mortality rates have skyrocketed for African Americans. The 5-year survival rate for cancer among African Americans diagnosed for 1986-1992 was about 44%, compared with 59% for White Americans. Blacks are also less likely to receive coronary angiography or coronary revascularization, which are two life saving surgeries used to treat CHD. So whoever coined the saying, "ignorance is bliss" was definitely not referring to health. Learning and knowing more will empower you to make better decisions and live a healthy life, not only in the physical, but also in the mental and spiritual sense.

The human being is a complex life form. The whole existence is made up of a spirit, a mental, and a physical life. These three parts of our being need to be balanced in order to live a full, happy, and healthy life. In this day and age individuals desire the quick fix, the magic pill, anything to escape the work and steadfastness needed to keep them fit and healthy. Whether it is taking a drug to calm the nerves or having stomach stapling surgery, the quick remedy is too often panned for, and at times dangerous. In case you did not know an unhealthy lifestyle not alone includes eating Twinkies but also lack of proper stress managing, which leads to a sedentary lifestyle.

Playing Play station or X-Box for hours, reaching for the slice of pizza, taking drugs and munching late nights are awful habits, which can lead to sickness and possible death. Hence, the vital urgency and importance to taking care of yourself starts with physical management. Do not wait until you are sick or diagnosed with an illness to take care of your body, mentally, and spiritually. Remember knowledge and action equals' power. What you do today play's a tremendous role on your health tomorrow.

~ Delali Goka

School was out and students were let loose for three months of warm weather fun. The bell that rang throughout the summer was not one which indicated the start of classes, but instead the promising melody of the ice cream trucks. The sun was high and sweltering causing youth to head to the beach and local pools in hopes to beat the

As the gun smoke clears parents and community organizations are left to rally in attempt to reclaim the innocence of children and their safety. They cannot bear the pain or hear another news report announcing one more life taken prematurely. Friends and family of victims mourn plenty, while local youth advocates and leaders organize groups to discuss the

on the streets of Boston. This according to Turner it is a momentary supplement that at the time may suppress the violence but only temporarily.

“There is a tendency to put more money into public safety activities geared to youth rather than preventative actions that can help keep them out of trouble,”

Someone Please Call 911

Our Youth are in Trouble

season's heat. However, it wasn't simply the sun that warmed the neighborhoods of the city this summer: it was youth violence and it blazed Boston streets.

Autumn leaves are falling, summer has passed, and Boston's many communities are left shaken. Teenagers, who have been negatively impacted by the sky rocketing rate of deaths on the streets of Boston, are back to school with questions unanswered.

possible implementations of action that could help cease the on-going and heart wrenching violence epidemic.

As a community member and City Counselor, Chuck Turner feels that there are no answers to youth violence in our communities. Instead Turner believes there *are* numerous things that can be done to stop it; starting with taking the emphasis off police presence. Due to the rise in violence and recent rapes police are increasing evident

points out Chuck Turner, “There's more emphasis on what do we do with them now that they are at risk or have gotten in trouble and are coming out. That's the wrong emphasis. It needs to be on a preventative basis.”

Turner also stresses that the transportation of drugs and handguns into urban communities is frequently ignored when discussing youth violence. How are illegal drugs and

unregistered firearms entering local neighborhoods and reaching the young?

"I think that if you look at youth violence, a lot is around the fight over territory," clarifies Turner, "We seriously need to consider legalizing drugs. In the 70's it became a major crime to possess drugs. You got major time for distribution, but as the penalties went up that increased the price of drugs. The drug trade had been going on but it wasn't a major business. I believe because the penalties on it weren't as severe as they [now] are. The number of people in jail quadrupled in the first thirty years. In 1973, there were 500,000 people in jail. In 2003, there were 200 million, one half of that [population] are African-Americans. Billions of dollars have been spent on drug detention, yet the only people who are getting arrested in any large numbers, are the people out on the streets. You don't hear of any banks being arrested for money laundering. It's a multi-billion dollar industry, so where is the money? It's not under beds, it's in these banks. So with all the surveillance apparatus they have, they can't find the banks that are laundering the money for a multi-billion dollar industry in the United States?"

Another other critical issue is the million-dollar cut of youth workers and school funding by the Federal Government. Boston police officer Lawrence Welch thinks the tendency to put more money into public safety than into preventative

movements is a common practice of governing bodies. Many view this as a message that the government has a disturbing lack of concern for urban youth issues.

"Federal funding for schools has gone down and the youth have nowhere to go and nothing to do," observes Welch, "To effectively solve the raise in youth violence we must first give money back to schools and community organizations. Unfortunately our youth have been put in a lose-lose situation."

The Urban Dreams Youth Development Program is one of many inner-city after school programs that has taken the initiative to be proactive in the Boston community by providing youth with an opportunity surpass all the negative activity taking place around them. Urban Dreams, formally known as the Mo Vaughn Youth Development Program, offers comprehensive programs in several crucial areas: education, tutoring, leadership training and career training development.

As a mother of both a 17 year old and a 5 year old son and Programs Coordinator at Urban Dreams, Charmaine Arthur is very concerned with the rise in youth violence.

"The rise in youth violence was not an overnight occurrence; it has been on the horizon for years now. We have seen an influx of young men and women transitioning back into the community without any solid plan. We have had major cuts in the

city and state budgets that have had a great impact on human service agencies. How do you cut education, after-school, youth program, health services, and any agencies that support and enhance the well being of our children's life but still have money to fund a war in Iraq?," questions Arthur, "We live in a society that is not proactive but reactive. What ever happened to prevention? We wait for things to get out of control before the community begins to raise our voices. The "village" is losing their values and morals. We have become afraid to discipline our children and we leave it to a state system that does not focus on the outcomes for our children. We must reach out to our young people and meet them where they are."

It is apparent that African proverb, it takes a village to raise a child, applies to the city of Boston. The united effort of neighborhood activist, political leaders, law enforcement, and youth geared programs is the only way to effectively end the heartbreaking loss of young lives. Youth violence isn't merely an urban issue but a detrimental community emergency.

~ Sasha C. Link a & Kat Noel

Because They Said I Couldn't

The Pilgrimage *Who would imagine crossing the ocean for a companion? In the midst of our country's war and pivotal election season Paul Guay visited Iran in order to bridge the gap between himself and friends who were once one click away.*

City of Friends In light of all that has happened since the autumn of 2001, I have used the internet to make friends in some of the most unlikely places, with some of the most unlikely people. I was tired of the propaganda, so I've figured that the best way to get at least some of the truth is to get it right out of the horse's mouth. I concentrated my search for international friends in the Middle East, with the desire to get to know some of the people who live in the region. I found that the best results from Iran. On August 14th I left Boston on Lufthansa Airways, to spend nine days in Tehran, a city of more than 12 million people located in Iran. The purpose of my voyage was to meet my Iranian pen pals for the first time. My pen friends and I have grown to know one another, and enjoy each other's company. I have grown attached to them now Persians consist of more than half of my top ten-friend list.

Tehran is a huge city set in the Elburz Mountains, and much of the terrain there is remarkably similar to New England. The seasons are also virtually identical. In the northern part of the city, at the base of the Elburz Mountains, Valasyr St runs for twenty miles, shaded by sycamores 70 feet tall or more, they provide a canopy for the high-end fashion shops and restaurants. Clean mountain water runs off and is dammed here, channeling water into man made streams that flow down both sides of the street. The temperature is noticeably cooler. The northern end of Tehran is where the upper and middle class live. Condominiums are very popular there. The price tag for newly constructed condos goes for 30,000 U.S. dollars. Being a construction worker I spent what amounted to an entire day, on two separate occasions with one of the bigger developers in Tehran, at one of his new developments.

In southern Tehran the scenery is quite different. This is where the poor live. There a street vendor can be found selling sheep stomach soup. In southern Tehran the people are more traditional. Islam plays a larger role here, and the people are



hard working pink collar. There are no Nikes for sale in the shops of south Tehran. These neighborhoods are beginning to have a similar social problem as that of the U.S. Heroin has become popular in Tehran, and although alcohol is illegal, there is plenty of bootleg vodka to go around. Vodka parties are common, and I really discovered that it's Persian custom to chase vodka down with yogurt.

Entering the Islamic Republic

When I arrived at Mehrabad Airport, I was glad that my friend Marshid and her mother planned on meeting me, despite the fact that a guide was supposed to. She greeted me with a bouquet of roses and I later learned that this was an Iranian tradition. Since my assigned guide never showed Marshid Z. was glad to take me under her wing. She found us all a cab and make sure that everything was in order before she left me at the hotel. Just as they were about to enter the cab I gave Mrs. Z a huge hug. This was the second crime I had committed and it was far from the last. The first was accompanying two women in a theocracy such as Iran's without being related to them.

Waking in Tehran

The following day I woke not knowing where I was. I vividly remember the chirping of car horns, along with other more familiar traffic sounds. Horn chirping is a tradition of sorts in Tehran. It is a way of telling other drivers you are there, sharing a lane. Lane sharing is also common there. Any three lane high-way is conveniently made into six. The constant chirping reminds me of crickets; not so much the sound as much as the sheer number of sounds at once. It took me a minute to realize where I was. Although I had only received 4 hours sleep after traveling for 20 hours, I got a second wind, took a shower, and made my way to the hotel lobby for breakfast. I spent with Marshid's father, Mr. Z and the first thing I did was get a haircut by a Persian barber. Within the barber shop there was no baseball talk here or Super bowl chat. I found that Iranians speak passionately about poetry and politics. The purpose of this trip was to exchange culture and meet friends. There were no museums on this tour, no ancient cities and no shopping sprees. I visited the homes of Iranians and spent many hours, day and night, walking the streets of Tehran with camera in hand trying to capture the essence of a culture different from my own.



Fashion and Art

Music and fashion are two areas that are definitely growing in Tehran. Fashion has undergone some dramatic changes since the elections of Feb. 2004. The morals police were taken off the streets, and as a result the women in Iran have taken the offensive, (in some cases literally). The chador has been reinvented by adding colors and trimming the excess cloth. No longer does it hide the figure. Law has not changed regarding proper dress, but the enforcement of those laws is no longer in place. While in Tehran I also visited six music shops and I was amazed at what was offered. Guitar playing is very popular, and there are some bands in Iran who has paved the way for others to follow. I had the opportunity to bring my Gibson electric guitar, to entertain some of my friends at a party, and later at the lobby of the Iranshahr Hotel. I had the chance to hear a band named Arian play. The band consist of three guitarists, two of them were woman. They had keyboards and an array of percussionists. This was an example of their breaking the mold. There is a lot going on in Iran besides music; there are other art forms thriving. Movie making is not only big in Iran, but it is also successful. As a result of being a closed society, the banning of many movies has created a great demand for good, quality films. More than a few have won international awards. Iran has its own little Hollywood. However, the government denied me permission to go there. I am interested in teaching English at the university so I figured it would be a wonderful opportunity to get the chance to tour the facility. They foreboded my entry to the Tehran University. Friday is also the holy day for Muslims. It was the only day that I heard prayer emanating from the loud speakers of the mosque across the street from my hotel. I had expected to hear it more often. That night I went for a walk down town, and to my surprise, many of the shops open. It was not long ago when Massachusetts stores were closed on Sunday. Despite what one in America might believe religion here is beginning to play less of a role.

Fridays

Friday is the holy day for Muslims. It was the only day that I heard prayer emanating from the loud speakers of the mosque across the street from my hotel. I had expected to hear it more often. That night I went for a walk down town, and to my surprise, many of the shops open. It was not long ago when

Massachusetts stores were closed on Sunday. Despite what one in America might believe, religion here is beginning to play less of a role. Friday is also hang-day. Eighteen Pakistani drug smugglers were hung in public on the second Friday I was there. They were each attached to a crane and hoisted in the air until they were dead. During their struggle with the police during their capture, ten Iranian police were killed. I also witnessed a protest in front of the British Embassy. I hear that this is a weekly occurrence. I was not allowed to take pictures while out in Tehran.

The new Iranians

The younger generation blames Islam and religion for the mistakes of their government. 60% of Iranians are under the age of 20. The voting age is 16. Even the conservatives have finally realized that if they want to stay alive, (politically, or otherwise) they had better loosen their grip. Since the hardliners have taken the majority again in parliament their first move was to dismiss the moral police. The people's reaction to this was a slight modification of their culture. The women responded with a changing of the dress code. No longer is the law stringent regarding proper dress. The hejab, although mandatory still, is rarely worn as to cover all of a woman's hair, and now Iranian women have added some brilliant colors to their wardrobes. Couples, some who are not married, are seen going for walks, caressing and even occasionally kissing. Women especially have enjoyed this lax attitude from the government. Look for Iran to come a long way in the near future.

A Special Pen Friend

One of my favorite pen friends, Snowbird, was nicknamed on our first instant message chat. I remember chatting online and looking out into the twilight to see snow falling in Boston. Coincidentally to my amazement it was also a snowy night in Tehran. Immediately I dubbed my new Iranian friend Snowbird and she loved it.

During one visit to Snowbird's house, something of cultural significance came to mind. After spending the entire evening with her, I had to leave because her father was coming home. In reaction to this I paused to look at Snowbird, her mother and sister. We all busted into a deep belly laugh. Then, it struck me. The disparity between our governments did not keep us from sharing this moment together. I came to the realization that a father's instinctive protection of his daughter is recognized in every one's culture. At her father's expense I was laughing hysterically with three dear friends, Islamic women in a shariat society whom everyone said I couldn't be with, in a home I was not supposed to be anywhere near and most importantly in a country where they said I couldn't go.

~ Paul Guay

TO A SISTER I SAW/ OR REMINISING

(For Doris)

I remember you... sister
You were young and we played together
On the banks of the Congo
I still remember how
The cool evening sun shone bright on your dark skin.
How good the breeze felt
As you and me walked along secret paths
That led us to secret places.
How nature and you and me formed a perfect triangle
And the morning sun that woke us up
Smiled a warm and natural smile.

I remember you ... sister.
Working side by side with me
In the southern cotton fields.
Toiling and sweating and dying inside
The Congo had dried up and
The sun was cold.
I still remember when you were taken from me
And violated by the beast
Slowly our triangle became a square

I remember you...sister.
Looking for a job and finding one
And now the hands that used to kiss the Congo
Was dipped into dish water.
The knees that used to kneel in the soft grass
Was now kneeling on a hardwood floor.
I still remember you bringing home the money
And me
With no job
Planning the budget.

I remember you...sister
Standing by the bus stop with your dashiki dress on
African beads and natural hair
Watching me walk by you
With a colleague education- money in my pocket and a white girl.

"But in my blindness. I have found my sight, because I have decided to remember. And looking into a dark past sometimes produces light."
So, I remember you...sister
I saw you again, a few minutes ago
I smiled as you passed by and said
"Hello...sister"
You smiled back and said
"...Hello"
I wanted to stop and ask
Sister have you forgotten me?
Do you reminisce?
Do you ever think back to the time when?
But I didn't have to
Because your clear dark eyes have already told me
Brother...I remember you too.

~ Ted Thomas

Black Expressions, 1973

Ted Thomas is the founder and former Editor-in-Chief of
The Onyx Informer and editor of *Black Expressions*

The Walls Can Talk

If the walls of your heart possessed spoken word, what would they say?
Would your four chambers echo encouragement and hope?
Or rather groan in anticipation of the ultimate climax?

Would those blood stained walls whisper hurt and testify?
Or keep secrets and remain mute and locked away until the next beat?
Would they engage in passionate, yet oh so necessary dialogue,
Exchanging life anecdotes and soulful soliloquies—
Or will they sing love and heart felt ballads to their karma twin...aka soul mate?

As for me....

If the walls of my heart possessed spoken word,
Simply and with a slight smile they would say in unison
"Keep lovin', even though....."

~Delali Goka

Chocolate Chip Muffins

I have a deep, limitless, unquenchable hunger, not for food or rest but for opportunity and knowledge.

I remember feeling this way as I looked for a familiar face down the dreary alley. Listening to the tiny droplets of water run between the miniature valleys, the brick's form landing in lakes of blood and water surrounded by gates of heroin needles. My head is tilted, mind racing questions—so many questions. Why do I have to be the one standing on the filthy jagged corner of concrete looking for my mother at 11:30 p.m. on a school night? My small, 7yr old sepia hands stuffed into the pockets of my stonewashed jeans and large almond shaped eyes are seeking something.

Where is my mother?

Why do I have to be the one going to school with dirty clothes and my hair uncombed with ringworm? Who knows what time is it now? My 3 year old sister is waiting for me; she's probably keeping herself busy by counting the roaches that run up and down the tattered wall paper, till I get back. She likes to do that. It makes her feel like she's contributing in some way. I was trying to get her some food. She's hungry. I am contemplating on whether we should go to school tomorrow... Hmm, I don't know, Nah! We can go to the shelter instead—tomorrow is chocolate chip muffin day.

~Bena Berry



Straight From The SOURCE

I'm about to let loose
A major string of
Everything to Rookie livin',
Performance Apparel.
New powered up protection

Counter Attack!
They want CD's cheaper
All Summer Long
My name is...
Scarface: The Fix
In stores from Holliston to Hollywood
It's everywhere you want to be,
A new breed of secret agent
No knob
No buttons
Just touch it.

In stores now,
This is the remix
7th sign.

Joy of Pickup pimpin'
Flossin' NT 404, World premier
Strictly business,
Executive decisions
Styles, behind the boards,
Rebel with a cause
On the Grind, Higher Learning
Quiet Storm.

Disorderlies, The Jokers Wild
Motion Record Report

Women on Top, Material Girls
Flippin Keys.

Man Vs. Machine, Absolute Power
Made Men.

Cut Loose
Get them before they're gone.

~ Josue Garcia

Dear Sisters, A Brother's Advice

I would like to share some knowledge that I have already given out to several women. These are some of the basic essentials that I hope will help you.

IF YOU 'FALL' IN LOVE WITH A GUY, YOU'LL EVENTUALLY HURT YOURSELF

Now before you say, "Oh my God, what is this kid talking about," hear me out. To me love is ultimately a choice, and it has to be mutual. It should be when two people desire to have a future together. Most of the time love is associated with an attraction. Attraction is all well and good, but when a woman 'falls in love' it's on a one way street. She can eventually hurt herself by prematurely seeking love when it isn't there yet. That's when you and your man are *not* on the same level. Some females take it too far and get into a lustful obsession. My advice is to have logic and self respect. If you're seeking love; make sure your man wants the same.

YOU REAP WHAT YOU SOW

This pertains to both men and women. I hear women say they want to find a nice educated man, who's clean, and will love them for who they are. However what is *your* track record like? If you love drinking, don't complain if your man comes home under the influence of alcohol. If you enjoy playing around with guy's emotions don't wonder why you've ended up with a player. Men look for women who share similar values and habits. In other words, good guys are looking for the good girls. Well at least I am. It's true in some cases good girls end up with guys who play emotional games and vice versa. What must be acknowledged is that you reap what your once sowed.

LOOK AT WHAT IS IN FRONT OF YOU

Listen, it's never too late to find your significant other. You don't have to go half way across the world to find him, either. I'm sure many guys are in the same situation as you, that you may have a lot in common with. Try guy friends you are cool with, but never have a chance to contact because you've been so busy. There's nothing wrong going through your phonebook and calling a brotha. You never know what may come. In that case my number is...

MAKE SURE YOU'RE OUT OF REBOUND

Before you call me, I mean that certain someone; make sure you're **NOT** just coming out of a relationship. I call this rebounding and often in the rebound you end up wanting the first guy who is nice to you. A relationship can't really be built on certain acts of kindness because the guy could still

be a jerk. First get your mind out of the clouds and get this last guy out of your system. Take some time to be by yourself and enjoy your own company. Then you should be ready to start over and create another relationship.

I hope this helps. I believe if you follow these guidelines, you'll have more fun getting to know guys, and less of a broken heart. Who knows, you might actually meet that certain someone that does want to love you the way you love him.

- Sway



STOP

**LISTEN TO WHAT
THE BROTHERS
HAVE TO SAY**

The Onyx Informer's RoundTable is an open uncensored discussion on hot topics.

Do you ever wish to be a fly on the wall in a male locker room? Do you wonder what men really discuss when women aren't around? The Onyx Informer has an exclusive preview of a juicy, uncensored, honest conversation between Ian Bouchard, James Brown, Wellington Hall, and William Reese.

Attraction

WH: The thing that catches my eye first of all is the body, which basically can make or break everything. I like thick thighs, and a nice round bottom.

JB: So you say you like an apple bottom?

WH: An apple bottom, a peach bottom.....

JB: Laughs

IB: I like the onion.

JB: You like the onion?

JB: That's what I'm talking about. You like the onion.

IB: Yeah same thing. A girl's stack, you know thick definitely something there.

JB: And also the eyes and the face because that's what you look into when you talk to them.

IB: A sexy voice doesn't hurt either. "1-900" voices.

WH: I like nice full lips, you know nice button nose and any color eyes it don't matter

JB: If you could take different parts of celebrities and put them together to make an ideal woman, what would it be?

WH: She'd have Trina's legs, thighs whatever, Melissa Fords booty. Lets see who got a nice stomach? Janet

Jackson's stomach. I'll take a nice C cup, that could be anybody.

IB: Angelina Jolie's lips.

JB: Angelina Jolie and Truth Hurts

WH: Foxy brown slanted eyes type you know I like that and as long as the eyebrows are neat I'm fine with that. That's it. The hair can be yours or not.

JB: If I could take different attributes, I would have the

whole package. She's actually got a pretty nice body all together. I might take the legs of Vivica Fox. I think she's got real nice legs.

She's actually tall. She's kind of taller than me, but that's okay.

JB: Come to think about it I also like Nia Long's face too.

IB: Who is she?

JB: She played in *Love Jones*, *Soul Food*, and *In Too Deep* with LL Cool J and Omar Epps

IB: I remember that movie but I still can't picture her

JB: I like Missy Elliot's lips too. She got some nice lips

IB: She lost a lot of weight.

JB: I think she looks sick since she lost all that weight. Her face is disproportioned to her body. When she was a little thicker she was proportioned, now she got a skinny neck I don't know how it's hanging on.

Kelly Price also lost some weight and she looks kind of sick. Her face is kind of sunk in and her lips are all big, abnormal.

Definition of Love

JB: What is my definition of love? I might revisit that question again.

IB: Definition of love? Love it's got to be mutual. I don't think you can love somebody that doesn't love you back.

JB: There are different levels of love though.

IB: There are difference of being in love and loving somebody. You know you love your mom, but you're not in love with your mom, so it's a deep question

"I'm going actually take Angelina Jolie's whole face I mean she's pretty sexy. Looks wise, she's got the whole package. She's actually got a pretty nice body all together. I might take the legs of Vivica Fox. I think she's got real nice legs. She's actually tall. She's kind of taller than me, but that's okay."

~ Ian Bouchard

legs of Tina Turner back in her prime, the back side of ... Who? I'm trying to think

WH: Ki Toy.

JB: Is that the chick in *The Way You Move*? Oh, yes. Yes. I would take her. Oh, my God, I would take that. In the stomach, she had a nice stomach too. She wasn't a butter head. She was attractive and the face, I would take the face of Pam Greer.

IB: I'm going actually take Angelina Jolie's whole face I mean she's pretty sexy. Looks wise, she's got the

JB: You want to answer that question?

WH: I'm going to try. My definition of love is to go that extra mile for somebody, willing to do whatever it takes to make that person happy, to see somebody for all their flaws good or bad, to care for them no matter what they do to you, no matter what they say you still have that care for them that loyalty for them. That's my definition of love.

JB My definition or what I view as love is... I mean there are different types. What I view is that love you feel when you are in love with somebody and the sound of their voice, not even conversation, is enough to just fill your day. It's deep,. You can have a bad day and just the thought of the other person you are in love with is all you need.

WH: I got to call my girl

IB: You will put that person first, you'll reprioritize your day to see them or do something for them, to skip out of class and call her. Anything that reminds you of them can make you happy, hearing their voice or smelling their perfume, something that reminds you of them.

JB: I have to really think about that one because it's deep.

Future Planning

JB Where do you see yourself in four years?

IB: Hopefully law school or grad school. I'm not ready to get a job yet. I want to say in school.

JB: In four years I see myself in grad school because I got two more to go and then at least two more years in which I will be in grad school. After grad school I see myself owning my own investment firm and hopefully through school make connections, network with different executive members of different

"My definition of love is to go that extra mile for somebody, willing to do whatever it takes to make that person happy, to see somebody for all their flaws good or bad, to care for them no matter what they do to you, no matter what they say you still have that care for them that loyalty for them. That's my definition of love. Relationship love."

~ Wellington Hall

companies, and just get my foot in and work in an investment firm. From there build cliental through friends.

IB: In ten years I would like to either have my own law firm or be on my way. I would love to do something with criminal defense and mostly defend people who need it. You got to protect people from the system.

WH: I honestly think, I'm not trying to be funny, that I'll be living at home. I'll be in grad school though. A lot times we have these unrealistic dreams about owning the world. Everybody wants that but how many people do you see that have that. I'm going to go to

grad school and after that I plan on going job hunting.

JB: I have to own a business because I can't do that corporate American thing. I did that for co-op and I was not feeling the nine to five and waking up everyday. It's like you're a robot and programmed. It's just not me. Of course there will be work involved with starting your own business

but it's worth it when you see the proof of your labor.

IB: That doesn't sit well with me either; busting my ass to make someone else rich. You definitely have to be in a position to benefit from your own work to really make it worth it. *William Reese arrives and enters the roundtable*

JB: What would you say attracts you to a woman physically?

WR: I would say her smile.

JB: Oh, another thing that physically attracts me to a female is her style and if she's confident in herself. You can tell just by a female demeanor, the way they stand and the way the walk, if she has confidence.

IB: Definitely. It's about confidence and intelligence. If the girl is an idiot and you can't have a good conversation with her then it's not going to go anywhere.

JB: I've spoken to females who as, "what do you want to talk about?". That to me is a negative. That's minus 1,000 points right there.

WH: To add on to that, what puts me off are girls who look good who know that you know that

they look good. That doesn't sit well with me.

IB: Yeah, they use it against you.

WH: They use it against you and try to flaunt all their stuff.

JB: Basically a female with her head gassed up. There are quite a few of those in Boston. It's hard to talk to them. If you're just saying hi they just walk by you as if you automatically wanted to talk

to them. It's a simple hi because I thought you were attractive. Before we forget, William what is your definition of love?

WR: Can love be defined? It's a feeling and it's hard to describe. It goes back to being on a certain level with someone because there's a difference between being in love and loving somebody. It definitely takes two people to be in love , to be on the same

level, and to be comfortable with each other. That's what it comes down to: being open and comfortable. I think that takes a long time to do.

JB: It is work. Also where do you see yourself in four years?

WR: I guess probably still in school. Hopefully I will be moving forward, constantly learning, and building good relationships and friendships.

Educating Yourself

JB: How important is educating yourself?

WR: It's very important. You can have an education given to you by someone else and it means nothing

because people don't tend to you what you really need to know. If you compare your high school education with your college education I am sure you will see a great disparity. That's something that I found out when I got here. You really need to go out of your way to learn new things and learn about the past.

"Can love be defined? It's a feeling and it's hard to describe. It goes back to being on a certain level with someone because there's a difference between being in love and loving somebody. It definitely takes two people to be in love , to be on the same level, and to be comfortable with each other. That's what it comes down to: being open and comfortable. I think that takes a long time to do."

~ William Reese

IB: I think that it's crucial educating yourself and that's pretty much all we've got. If you have someone pushing you through college, you get mediocre grades, but can't do anything with what you've learned then it's worthless. If you educate yourself you will find yourself in positions to do well, become successful, and capitalize on opportunities.

WB: I also think that there are different types of education. You learn something different in engineering then you do in biology or history. When it comes down to it there has to be an education that relates to self; trying to

understand yourself and learning more about where you came from. That's really important perhaps even more so then what you learn in school.

WH: I am really agreeing with William on that one because it makes me think back to my freshman year.

Back then I was undecided and in my various classes there were all these kids that I thought were the smartest kid I ever seen. My ruler for measuring who was the smartest or more educated kept on changing. The common denominator is your knowledge of yourself and once you know that you can take on any task.

JB: It's also good to educate yourself on your surroundings. You need to educate yourself on your community because once you educate yourself you can give back to that community and educate others. The best you can do besides educating yourself is educating others.

**BE SURE TO PICK UP
FEBRUARY'S ISSUE OF
THE ONYX INFORMER
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WHAT ELSE THE
BROTHERS HAD TO SAY**



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It's the brother's turn at the
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holding nothing back

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